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SUBJECT: NATO-RUSSIA: MISSILE DEFENSE DEBATE PLAYING OUT AS
DEBATE BETWEEN U.S. AND RUSSIA

REF: USNATO 257

Classified By: Ambassador Victoria Nuland, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The April 20th meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) reinforced with missile defense (MD) experts demonstrated again the U.S. commitment to transparency with our NATO allies and with Russia on our MD plans, while the Russians focused on trying to paint the U.S. proposed system to be based in Poland and the Czech Republic as destabilizing and unnecessary. The Allies gradually rallied to limit Russian room to maneuver in their responses to the Russian presentation and cited the NRC as the appropriate forum for the discussion. But many Allies still were unwilling to wade too deeply into what they probably regard primarily as a U.S.-Russian exchange. END SUMMARY

LTG Obering Frames the Issue for Russia and the Alliance

12. (C) The Secretary General (SYG) Jaap de Hoop Scheffer opened the meeting by welcoming missile defense experts and highlighted that dialogue and cooperation in forums such as the NRC is essential to meet security challenges, and that such cooperation had put missile defense on the right track. Lieutenant-General Trey Obering, U.S. Missile Defense Agency Director (aided by Paul Kozluskys who presented additional slides on the threat) delivered a presentation that focused on providing the Allies our assessment of the real and emerging ballistic missile (BM) threat from states such as Iran and North Korea; system capability including what it could and could not do; and the potential for further cooperation with the Russian Federation and the Alliance. Following LTGen Obering's presentation, Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation John Rood gave a readout of his recent trip to Moscow and meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Kiselyak. A/S Rood highlighted the meeting's healthy dialogue and said that the U.S. made wide-ranging cooperation proposals to the Russians across the full range of MD development and deployment. The U.S. distributed copies of the non-paper on potential areas of MD cooperation to the members of the NRC, as had been done earlier in the NAC, and stressed that the U.S. stands ready to follow up with Russia on the proposals.

Russia: Missile Defense is a De-stabilizing Factor for Europe

13. (C) The Russian delegation was led by Lieutenant-General Evgeniy Buzhinskiy, head of the Russian Ministry of Defense, International Military Cooperation Department and Director of the Department of Security and Disarmament Antonov. They provided the Council with a briefing presentation on Russia's reaction to the proposed U.S. system. Moscow's argument stressed four main themes: 1) The U.S. had exaggerated the BM threat from Iran and North Korea, citing effective proliferation controls (MTCR), limits of SCUD technology, and the lack of long-range testing capability for Iran, which would continue to hinder their respective strategic programs; 2) The system's basing in Poland and the Czech Republic is not ideal for countering threats from a southern location like Iran, (they claim that France, Turkey, and Italy would be more logical) arguing that instead the system's deployment in Eastern Europe could be used against Russian ICBMs; 3) Citing the Chinese example, the proposed system could eventually have an anti-satellite capability; 4) The MD system would be destabilizing for European security since it would not provide equal protection and that Russia would be forced to take corresponding countermeasures. The Russians tried to frame the issue as a new and unnecessary threat for European stability and contrasted the proposed system with their own "benign" initiatives in theater missile defense, an area of cooperation that has wide support within NATO. Lastly, the Russians told the Council that cooperation with the U.S. on MD will not entirely address Moscow's concerns. They said that U.S. mobile/orbital radars in the Czech Republic and the Caucasus could be aimed against Russia and that there was nothing that could prevent the U.S. from increasing the number of ground based interceptors (GBI) based in Europe and creating multiple hit-to-kill warheads on high velocity GBIs in the future.

Allies: Gradually Rally to Hem Russia In

14. (C) While Allies universally welcomed the exchange of views within the NRC, citing it as the appropriate forum to discuss MD, they generally appeared unwilling to get squarely in the middle on an issue that they probably see as a U.S.-Russian exchange. Numerous allies welcomed the U.S. willingness to engage the Russians on the full spectrum of MD cooperation, with the Canadian PermRep, supported later by France and the Netherlands, requesting to know Russia's reaction to the U.S. proposals soon. Allies also stressed the importance of next week's political level discussion at the meeting of the NRC during the Foreign Ministerial in Oslo. Although a range of Allies (including the Netherlands, Canada, Spain, Czech Republic, and Italy) were in favor of increased sharing of information with Russia in the hope of clarifying the threat, the UK, Canada, Czech Republic and Poland also questioned the Russian threat assessment affirmatively stating they believed a missile threat existed. The Allies (including the Germans), however, were careful not to provide a divided front in face of the Russians saying that the full range of tools should be used to counter evolving threats including diplomacy, proliferation controls, and military options. Germany and the UK also noted that MD bolsters deterrence options and can dissuade potential proliferators from offensive missile system development. Norway also specifically rebutted the Russian suggestion that the Vardo radar could be used to expand U.S. plans, saying it is not part of the U.S. MD architecture as it had previously noted to the Russian government.

U.S. is Serious about Cooperation

15. (C) Ambassador Nuland agreed with Allies that the NRC is a good forum for MD dialogue and that the recent U.S. bilateral cooperation proposals with Russia could be adapted for use in the NRC. She further stressed the proposed system is about North Korea and Iran, and not Russia, reiterating Secretary Gates' comments that "one Cold War was more than enough".

MDA Rebuts Russian Claims Authoritatively

¶6. (C) LTG Obering concluded the meeting by giving a strong point-by-point rebuttal of the Russian arguments saying that locating the proposed system in other countries, such as Turkey, was not ideal given its close proximity and would not provide optimal coverage of Europe. He further went on to say that his agency has no budget for increasing the amount of planned GBIs and that the system does not have an anti-satellite capability due to its design and the lack of such a mandate for the GBI system. He also said future plans to increase the number of hit-to-kill warheads on the GBIs could not mature before 2017 and would not destroy multiple offensive missiles, but rather would give more chances to destroy the more sophisticated threat missiles ten years from now. He explained that Iran or North Korea may have maneuvering and decoy deployment capability for their missiles by then.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: We got considerable traction with Allies with our continuous transparency in NATO and the NRC and particularly with our cooperation offers to Russia. If Moscow does not step up to the plate on cooperation, Allies will be disappointed and much less sympathetic to Russian concerns.

NULAND